

On Civil Rights, Armed Citizens[®], and Historical Overdose

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ABSTRACT Today's radically sovereign Armed Citizen[®]—a commodity fetish trademarked by the NRA—derives his representational and ethical power from fantasies of self-defensive heroism rooted in historical distortions that obscure the traces of armed settler colonialist violence and racial capitalism. Such historical "overdose" flattens anti-racist civil rights activism, making us "complaisant hostages" of a selective memory that serves self-destructive, necropolitical structures today.

KEYWORDS civil rights, gun culture, United States

The National Rifle Association is America's longest-standing civil rights organization.

NRA promotional materials and website¹

People can suffer from historical overdose, complaisant hostages of the pasts they create.

Michel-Rolph Trouillot²

When Mabel Robinson Williams was in her twenties, she lived in Monroe, North Carolina with her husband, Robert, and their two young children. Rural North Carolina in the 1950s was a dangerous place for a young Black family, especially one actively resisting white supremacist violence and the exclusionary structures of Jim Crow. Given the state's refusal to protect civil rights activists from the onslaught of racist backlash, armed "self-reliance" became vital to collective Black survival. In the late 1950s, the Williamses assembled a rifle club comprised of Black community members who used firearms to defy white supremacist violence in its many forms, and they decided to apply for membership in the National Rifle Association (NRA). At the time, the NRA was primarily concerned with promoting firearm training and safety instruction for hunters, and Robert and Mabel believed their group would benefit from the organization's abundant safety and legal information. However, in their application materials, they avoided indicating their group's racial composition. As Mrs. Williams explained in an interview some four decades later, "I'm sure when we joined and the years after then, had [the NRA] known we were a Black group, they would have revoked our charter."³ When asked why it would have concerned the NRA to know that their group was Black, Williams explained that whites "knew that if a large number of Black people should take up arms that . . . it may lead to a . . . civil war." Whites had "control of the police department and of the state troopers, the National Guard. And they didn't intend to release that power. And they felt that [Blacks taking up arms] was a threat to the power."⁴ It was evident to Mabel and Robert Williams that the NRA would not have supported armed Black self-defense in the 1950s.

Half a century later, NRA leadership would actively seek out and invoke legacies of Black armed militancy and anti-racist activism for inclusion in their genealogy of “gun rights.” Decades after Robert and Mabel Williams secured their stealthy membership for the Monroe, North Carolina Black Armed Guard, NRA leaders pointed to this instance as evidence of a long tradition of advocacy for race justice and civil rights. As Robert was battling the advanced stages of cancer in the 1990s, the NRA invited him to their annual meeting to celebrate the organization’s steady support for the Black armed struggle against racial terror. Reflecting on the episode, Mabel Williams laughed as she described how NRA leaders “talked about Robert Williams and how his rifle club allowed them to survive in the racist state of North Carolina.”⁵ The irony was not lost on her.

This historical sleight-of-hand represents one among many appropriations of anti-racist civil rights legacies in the service of ostensibly race-neutral necropolitical governance. Deliberate reinventions of the past have proven vital to a contemporary agenda of “gun rights” that concentrates the power to kill into the hands of predominantly white, male-identified Armed Citizens[®] while profiting off the criminalization and disposal of vulnerable populations.⁶ The United States currently boasts the highest frequency of mass shootings,⁷ the most firearms in the world—approximately one per person—and the highest rates of incarceration. Add to this volatile mix an enduring tradition of militarized violence against people of color and low-income communities, and the necropolitical implications of a gun-saturated, militarized culture come into clearer focus. We have so thoroughly “civilized the art of killing,” in social theorist Achille Mbembe’s words, that our selective distribution of militarized might appears race-neutral and universal, an egalitarian call to arms for all “law-abiding” citizens.⁸ Even amidst increasing mounds of evidence that more guns amount to more gun deaths, that the spread of selectively Armed Citizenship renders already vulnerable and criminalized populations more precarious, the seductive promise of lethal self-defense as a right and responsibility of good citizenship triumphs over logic and empirical evidence.⁹

This essay addresses the codependency of contemporary necropolitical governance on historical narratives that frame Armed Citizenship as the heroic solution to civilian precarity and state recalcitrance. Distorted depictions of Black armed resistance empower contemporary sovereign subjects to weaponize self-defense for the efficient destruction, removal, and erasure of the socially dead. The late anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot underscored the pernicious consequences of “historical overdose,” which seems an apt description for the process through which legacies of Black militancy have been co-opted in the service of contemporary color-blind reverence for a predominantly white and masculine armed sovereign subject.¹⁰ Trouillot’s work exposes the silences that pervade the multi-layered process of historical production, emphasizing the fraught relationship between what happened and what is said to have happened. Trouillot’s attention to these “two sides of historicity” reveals how power shapes widely held historical “truths,” and how claims to historical authenticity are always subject to their producers’ biases, failures of memory, and above all, embeddedness in governing structures.¹¹ Today’s radically sovereign Armed Citizen[®]—a commodity fetish trademarked by the NRA—derives his representational and ethical power from fantasies of self-defensive heroism rooted in historical distortions that obscure the traces of armed settler colonialist violence and racial capitalism. Such historical “overdose” flattens anti-racist civil rights activism, making us “complaisant hostages” of a selective memory that serves self-destructive, necropolitical structures today.

The fiction of sovereign “gun rights,” of universal access to the tools of self-defensive lethality, underwrites neoliberal governance-as-self-care. Powerful corporate interests—including private prisons and firearm manufacturers—thrive as the state outsources the costly work of policing the ungovernable and disposing of the socially dead. Sociologist Jennifer Carlson investigates how “policing has seeped beyond the formal boundaries of the state over the past several decades,” becoming diffused among a growing cast of predominantly male and white “citizen protectors.”¹² In an age of socioeconomic decline and eroding faith in the state’s capacity to protect the citizenry, guns signify “independence, self-reliance, and civic duty” for a population that feels disenfranchised and forgotten.¹³ According to sociologist Angela Stroud, “those who see themselves as good guys rely on bad guys to make sense of themselves; to that extent good guys need the racialized and classed specter of the bad guy.”¹⁴ The spread of civilian concealed carry (now legal in all US states and territories) and “stand your ground” laws (which selectively eliminate the duty to retreat), combined with state deregulation of firearm production, distribution, and civilian ownership empower idealized “Good Guys with Guns” to assume the mantle of collective policing and securitization. The capacity to position oneself as a heroic, color-blind “Good Guy” depends increasingly upon the representational power of historic civil rights activism.

A 2015 video in the NRA’s “Freedom’s Safest Place” series features an elderly Black woman describing how the state’s restrictive gun laws, particularly the prohibition against keeping firearms in subsidized housing, prevented her from defending herself from “gang bangers and drug dealers.” “I’m a good person. I never bothered anybody,” she reassures her audience, “but I can’t afford a nice house in a safe neighborhood.” Following the standard format of the series, the woman does not provide her name, but she does brandish her civil rights credentials. She describes having “marched behind Martin Luther King at Selma” before declaring a firearm as her only true path to safety amidst urban decay.¹⁵ The ad, entitled “My Rights” capitalizes on progressive movements to defend Black lives while deploying racially coded symbols of predatory masculinity in the form of “thugs” and “gang bangers.” It positions an elderly, peace-loving activist from the mid-twentieth century as a canary in the mine of self-defensive sovereignty. If she’s not allowed to exercise her Second Amendment rights to protect herself from dangerous criminals, then what makes the (presumably white, male) viewer think those rights can’t be snatched away from him? Having participated in the 1965 march of several thousand peaceful demonstrators through Alabama, the elderly speaker wields the moral authority of nonviolent civil rights activism even as she promotes the urgent necessity of armed defense against criminal masculinities whose presence undermines both public safety and property values.¹⁶ For this Armed Citizen®, the greatest threats to her safety are today’s criminal “thugs” and the state’s intrusion on her rights; armed white nationalism is a relic of a distant past.

A recent wave of historical scholarship illuminates the role of armed Black militancy in supporting twentieth-century civil rights gains. Among them are Jasmin Young’s dissertation, “Strapped,” which analyzes the armed militancy of Black female activists, including Mabel Williams, during struggles for Black survival and citizenship.¹⁷ Historian Akinyele Umoja investigates how civil rights activists participating in peaceful demonstrations, voter registration drives, and economic boycotts looked to their armed allies for protection from state-sanctioned white supremacist violence. According to Umoja, the Ku Klux Klan and other racist groups were less likely to threaten peaceful activists when they saw Black gun-owners standing sentry with their weapons at the

ready.¹⁸ Without armed protection, as Mississippi farmer Hartman Turnblow warned Martin Luther King in 1964, "this non-violent stuff" might get people killed.¹⁹

In spite of the growing collection of historical scholarship documenting Black armed resistance, our popular depictions of civil rights activism continue to emphasize and to celebrate peaceful resistance, occluding the necessity for armed militancy in the face of persistent state and civilian violence. Dominant portrayals of the modern civil rights movement as peaceful and non-violent serve our nation's dependency on linear national progress narratives in which good inevitably triumphs over evil. Historian Jeanne Theoharis discusses how "the civil rights movement became a way for the nation to feel good about its progress" without seriously engaging the complexity of Black efforts to resist white supremacy.²⁰ The militancy-obscuring, established narrative of Black civil rights locates the most extreme forms of white supremacy comfortably in the past, even as contemporary white supremacist and fascist organizations are on the rise.²¹ According to this reductionist logic, which Theoharis reveals to occlude the power and persistence of "Black organization and intrepid witness," racial terror was perpetrated by isolated pockets of reactionary racism rather than systemically embedded in our nation's governing structures.²²

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the recent wave of rich historical research on civil rights militancy has accompanied a spike in appropriation by members of an absolutist "gun rights" lobby. Eager to airbrush their own racist legacies, and to downplay the connections between reactionary armed sovereignty and white fears of Black militancy, contemporary advocates for "gun rights" position Second Amendment rights as those which always-already substantiate all other rights of citizenship. Distorted depictions of Black paramilitary self-defense illuminate the power-infused lopsidedness of "retrospective significance," as Michel-Rolph Trouillot termed the ways in which contemporary actors instrumentalize the past in justification of existing power structures.²³ Today, the NRA and its allies in Armed Citizenship claim a genealogy that includes, indeed depends upon, Black armed militancy as a legitimacy-conferring model of self-care and radical sovereignty. Framing the NRA as the nation's "longest-standing civil rights organization," white Armed Citizens fashion themselves as crusaders against "racist" gun control even as they participate in what Angela Stroud describes as a racialized calculus of identifying as "good guys with guns."²⁴ An undated article on the website Ammo.com ("Your Best Source for Discount Ammo Online") illuminates the necropolitical corporate stakes in claiming a legacy of Black armed militancy. The author described the Williams's "Black Armed Guard" as "nothing more than a fancy name for an officially chartered National Rifle Association chapter."²⁵ Here the stakes in consumer-centered sovereignty and neoliberal self-care are stark. Mabel and Robert Williams's Black Armed Guard, which took up arms in the service of collective Black "self-reliance," serves as a model of anti-government agitation for today's predominantly white Armed Citizenry. This framing reinvents the past to argue that contemporary efforts to regulate firearm usage reinforce Black subjugation, while characterizing guns and their unfettered consumption on the open market as vital to personal sovereignty against both criminal strangers and the looming specter of "big government."

Such contortions of history require significant erasure of instances in which the NRA sought to undermine armed Black activists who stood up to white supremacist violence. A favorite target of NRA criticism was the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, founded in 1966 by Bobby Seale and Huey Newton to protect Black citizens from police brutality and harassment. Like its precursors, the Black Armed Guard in North Carolina and the Deacons of Defense in Louisiana, the Black Panthers pursued a holistic, community-centered

approach to racial justice. Armed protection from police harassment was one among many services, including free breakfasts and health clinics, that the Panthers provided for members of the communities they served.²⁶ Yet a 1970 editorial in the NRA's widely distributed publication, *American Rifleman*, condemned the Black Panther Party as a "primarily racist . . . political organization" in contrast to the NRA's "non-political and non-partisan" approach, "to preserve America by peaceful means for the sake of all good Americans."²⁷ The NRA's perception of "good Americans" clearly excluded Black activists who defied racist power structures. This editorial appeared several years before the NRA's transformation into the reactionary voice for absolutist "gun rights" that we know today. It was published three years after then California governor Ronald Reagan supported the Mulford Act, which eliminated the open carry of guns in the state.²⁸ The legislation was designed to undermine the Black Panther Party's capacity to wield firearms to protect Black citizens from police violence. The first presidential candidate publicly supported by the NRA, Ronald Reagan would join the NRA's crusade for "gun rights" for "decent law-abiding citizens," while launching a "crackdown on crime."²⁹ Reagan's surgical approach—his racially selective distribution of "gun rights"—appealed to the NRA, and his image graced the July 1983 cover of *American Rifleman*.

Given the contemporary necropolitical state's dependency on the appearance of colorblind neutrality, proponents of Armed Citizenship must distance themselves from white supremacy past and present. Contemporary champions of "gun rights," seeking the legitimacy of color-blind multiculturalism, selectively appropriate Black militancy while disparaging the critical content of contemporary movements for racial justice. The "gun rights as civil rights" narrative harnesses demands for individual rights to reactionary ideals of individual sovereignty-as-Armed Citizenship. Spurious claims to civil rights legacies reassure today's "locked and loaded" Armed Citizen[®] that being publicly armed and standing one's ground against a perceived threat are racially neutral "rights," even when such measures contribute to necropolitical governance that criminalizes Black and Brown populations. The race-neutral language of the laws governing civilian gun carry and the NRA's Armed Citizen[®] campaign promise that any/all citizens may invoke the law to "stand their ground" when in practice, the right of lethal self-defense applies only to the select few.

The false historical collapsing of civil rights with "gun rights" masks both the specificity of the past and the on-going white supremacist violence of the present. In the prevalent "gun rights" imagination, "all lives matter" is the defiant response to "Black lives matter."³⁰ White supremacy appears as either a relic of a bygone age or as a state practice of redistributive and regulatory power. Perhaps most critically, this narrative conveniently elides Black paramilitary appeals to *collective* self-defense against pervasive white supremacist power. The investment in individual, sovereign self-care reinforces what Kwame Holmes terms a "necrocapitalist" agenda of privatized security based on the extermination of Black life.³¹ It also obscures the radically collectivist political critique at the heart of on-going struggles for racial justice.

Contemporary Armed Citizenship therefore depends on a mutually reinforcing process of "historical overdose" by which individual, armed responses to perceived insecurity—embodied in racialized figures of predatory masculinity who transgress the boundaries of white property—become naturalized and celebrated as idealized citizenship. The historical ammunition of the Second Amendment that enables the Armed Citizen to flex his militarized muscle is nevertheless anchored in an exclusionary praxis of armed self-defense, and the "right to keep and bear arms" in the interest of collective "defense"

originated in an *offensive* against indigenous and Black and Brown people, sanctifying what Cheryl Harris termed “whiteness as property.”³² In order for the armed “good guy” to perform the work of necropolitical discipline, the state must minimize the social and economic costs of killing.³³ Thus legal innovations like “stand your ground” laws, concealed carry, and constitutional carry—each championed by the NRA and its legislative allies—provide the means by which those considered “law-abiding” may carry their personal arsenals into public space with little concern for criminal liability.

Perhaps another symptom of historical overdose is the continued struggle to create coherent and linear chronologies out of otherwise incomprehensible violence. Efforts to claim historical exceptionality multiply in the wake of each mass shooting. In November 2017, CNN journalist Saeed Ahmed wrote, “Mass shootings in America are getting deadlier. Of the 30 deadliest shootings in the US dating back to 1949, 18 have occurred in the last 10 years. Two of the five deadliest took place in just the last 35 days.”³⁴ Activist and journalist Shaun King described the November 2018 Sutherland Springs, Texas shooting as “the deadliest church shooting in the history of the U.S.”³⁵ Discussions of the October 2018 shooting at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh situate it as “the deadliest [attack] on Jews in U.S. history.”³⁶ Each mass shooting sets a new precedent, ratcheting up the stakes in an increasingly deadly game.

Even as we fit mass shootings into tidy chronologies, each white-presenting male shooter—usually with a history of intimate partner or family violence—looms as an outlier, another crazed and irrational “lone wolf,” dehistoricized and unanchored from any repeating pattern of racialized gender violence. The exonerating power of armed white masculinity ensures that those responsible for our nation’s deadliest violence—from “domestic terrorism” to intimate partner violence—retain their sovereign individuality, while armed white masculinity itself remains under-examined.

These historical acts of coherent exceptionality disseminate a selective call-to-arms to those who imagine themselves as dispossessed by multicultural threats to white masculine hegemony. The construction of a legible historical narrative is vital to the process by which citizens are called upon to revere and to merit the rights of Second Amendment sovereignty. The fetishized “law-abiding citizen” must step heroically into the vacuum of unregulated violence to protect the innocent, and to defend private property from encroachment by an ever-expanding litany of predatory strangers.










Prevailing narratives about the urgent need for self-defensive violence take shape against a backdrop of typically dark, criminalized masculinities. Necropolitical Armed Citizenship serves neoliberal fragmentation, as systems of collective resistance disperse under exclusionary nationalist logics of insecurity as “stranger danger.” A parade of threatening strangers—“illegals,” “terrorists”, criminal “thugs”—invoke racial and gender tropes of primitive, predatory masculinity. This historical slippage fortifies an epistemological role-reversal where the perpetrators of violence masquerade as its victims, the victims of historic and on-going white supremacist violence are blamed as perpetrators, and Armed Citizens are heroes.³⁷

Appropriating legacies of armed Black resistance naturalizes the corporate state’s expansion of militarized practices in the service of personal and national security. As demonstrated in the rapid spread of “stand your ground” laws to over half the states, the epistemological connective tissue between a corporatizing carceral state and a necrocapitalist territorial crisis in value renders vulnerable lives disposable while

weaponizing self-defense for the select few.³⁸ Appeals to civil rights legacies confer legitimacy on a contemporary project of necropolitical governance, an alliance of militarized corporatism and neoliberal extraction, based on a color-blind ethos of self-care in which *all* good citizens are Armed Citizens, and those targeted by police and civilian brutality are retroactively labeled criminal “bad guys.”³⁹ Such historical overdose effaces the asymmetrical violence of dispossession and disposability, while naturalizing a color-blind slippage of false equivalencies.

Selective memorialization of Black militancy as a model of individual armed sovereignty perpetuates belief in Armed Citizenship as the *only* solution to our most pressing security threats. Meanwhile, contemporary reverence for peaceful civil rights struggle sanitizes the violence of the twentieth century while distracting us from the significance of collective Black militancy to civil rights successes. When the champions of necropolitical governance usurp legacies of Black armed militancy, they invest the cry of “gun rights” with the moral authority of anti-racist civil rights, while equating gun regulation with white supremacy. But the pitfalls of “historical overdose” cut both ways; as progressive critics of “gun rights” attribute our epidemic of gun violence to the powerful influence of the NRA and other advocates of absolutist, individual Armed Citizenship, we risk missing the wider epistemological web in which gun control efforts depend—historically and in the present—on racialized appeals to “Stranger Danger.” We must acknowledge and account for the historic complicity of “gun control” with the criminalization of vulnerable populations, lest we remain captive to the history-distorting, panic-based propaganda of contemporary Armed Citizenship. Our resistance to a necropolitical agenda of “gun rights” sovereignty must defy the historical flattening of struggles for racial justice, lest we too become seduced by a radically individualist fantasy of violent self-care.

Notes

1. See the NRA website: National Rifle Association, “About the NRA,” <https://home.nra.org/about-the-nra/> < <https://home.nra.org/about-the-nra/> > 
2. Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston, Beacon Press, 1994) xviii. 
3. Mabel Williams, interview by David Cecelski, August 20, 1999, interview K-0266, transcript, Southern Oral History Program Collection, UNC Center for the Study of the American South, Chapel Hill, NC. 
4. Williams, interview. 
5. Williams, interview. 
6. Since the early twentieth century, “Armed Citizen” has been the title of the NRA’s American Rifleman column about civilians who fight crime using firearms. More recently, the NRA registered “Armed Citizen” as a trademark. 
7. According to the United States Congressional Research Service, a mass shooting is defined as an incident in which more than four people—not including the shooter—are killed. 
8. Achille Mbembe, “Necropolitics,” (trans. Libby Meintjes) *Public Culture* 15, no. 1 (2003) 11–40. 
9. See, for example, the Harvard Injury Control Research Center’s literature review by Lisa Hepburn and David Hemenway, “Firearm Availability and Homicide: A Review of the Literature,” *Aggression and Violent Behavior: A Review Journal* 9 (2004): 417–40. 

10. Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, xviii. [↗](#)
11. Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 24. [↗](#)
12. Jennifer Carlson, *Citizen Protectors: The Everyday Politics of Guns in an Age of Decline* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 172. [↗](#)
13. Carlson, *Citizen Protectors*, 112. [↗](#)
14. Angela Stroud, *Good Guys With Guns: the Appeal and Consequences of Concealed Carry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 110. [↗](#)
15. NRA, *Freedom's Safest Place/My Freedom*, YouTube, accessed April 24, 2016, www.youtube.com/watch?v=n2Aj1WnNkYI. [↗](#)
16. Kwame Holmes discusses the value of Black death to middle class property values in "Necrocapitalism, Or the Value of Black Death," *Bully Bloggers*, 2017. [↗](#)
17. Jasmin A. Young, "Strapped: A Historical Analysis of Black Women and Armed Resistance, 1959–1979" (PhD diss., Rutgers University, 2018). See also Charles Cobb, *This Nonviolent Stuff'll Get You Killed: How Guns Made the Civil Rights Movement Possible* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014); Lance E. Hill, *The Deacons for Defense: Armed Resistance and the Civil Rights Movement* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Nicholas Johnson, *Negroes and the Gun: The Black Tradition of Arms* (Prometheus Books, 2014); Donna Jean Murch, *Living for the City: Migration, Education, and the Rise of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Christopher Strain, *Pure Fire: Self-Defense as Activism in the Civil Rights Era* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2005); Timothy Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Akinyele Umoja, *We Will Shoot Back: Armed Resistance in the Mississippi Freedom Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2013); Simon Wendt, *The Spirit and the Shotgun: Armed Resistance and the Struggle for Civil Rights* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2007). [↗](#)
18. Umoja, *We Will Shoot Back*, 271–274. [↗](#)
19. Cobb, *This Nonviolent Stuff*, 7. [↗](#)
20. Jeanne Theoharris, *A More Beautiful and Terrible History: the Uses and Misuses of Civil Rights History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018), ix. See also Tommie Shelby and Brandon M. Terry's introduction to their edited volume, *To Shape a New World: Essays on the Political Philosophy of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018), 1–4. [↗](#)
21. ADL Center on Extremism, "The New Hate and Old: The Changing Face of American White Supremacy," 2018, accessed June 18, 2019, <https://www.adl.org/new-hate-and-old> < <https://www.adl.org/new-hate-and-old> > . [↗](#)
22. Theoharris, *A More Beautiful and Terrible History*, xi. [↗](#)
23. Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 26–27. [↗](#)
24. For a detailed discussion of the racial, class, and gender calculus of seeing oneself as an armed "good guy," see Angela Stroud's chapter "Good Guys and Bad Guys," *Good Guys*, 83–111. [↗](#)
25. "Robert F. Williams and Armed Black Self-Defense," Ammo.com, accessed June 1, 2019, <https://ammo.com/articles/guns-nra-and-american-civil-rights-movement-guide> < <https://ammo.com/articles/guns-nra-and-american-civil-rights-movement-guide> > . [↗](#)
26. Nick Chiles, "8 Black Panther Party Programs That Were More Empowering Than Federal Government Programs," *Atlanta Black Star*, March 26, 2015. [↗](#)
27. Ashley Halsey Jr. "Black Panthers and Blind Kittens," *American Rifleman*, September 1970, 20. [↗](#)
28. Jill Lepore, "Battleground America: One Nation, Under The Gun," *New Yorker*, April 16, 2012. [↗](#)
29. Ronald Reagan, address to the NRA annual meeting, *American Rifleman*, May 1984, 40. [↗](#)

30. Recent examples include Don McDougall, "Do All Lives Matter? 5 Questions for the Anti-Gun Left," Ammoland.com, March 15, 2016, and the KKK-sponsored "White Lives Matter" demonstration in Anaheim, California on February 27, 2016. [↗](#)
 31. Holmes, "Necrocapitalism." [↗](#)
 32. Cheryl Harris, "Whiteness as Property: Race, Racism, and the Law," *Harvard Law Review* 106 (June 1993): 1709; See also Roxane Dunbar-Ortiz, *Loaded: A Disarming History of the Second Amendment* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2018). [↗](#)
 33. Marcus Lee, "Originating Stand Your Ground: Racial Violence and Neoliberal Reason," *Du Bois Review Social Science Research on Race* (May 2019): 1–23. [↗](#)
 34. Saeed Ahmed, "2 of the 5 Deadliest Mass Shootings in Modern US History Happened in the Last 35 days," *CNN*, November 6, 2017. <https://www.cnn.com/2017/11/05/health/deadliest-mass-shootings-in-modern-us-history-trnd/index.html> < <https://www.cnn.com/2017/11/05/health/deadliest-mass-shootings-in-modern-us-history-trnd/index.html>> . [↗](#)
 35. Shaun King, "THIS PAST SUNDAY morning, Devin Patrick Kelley walked into a small country church in the rural south Texas town of Sutherland Springs and shot nearly every single person in the building," Facebook post, November 8, 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/shaunking/posts/this-past-sunday-morning-devin-patrick-kelley-walked-into-a-small-country-church/1600623783309867/> < <https://www.facebook.com/shaunking/posts/this-past-sunday-morning-devin-patrick-kelley-walked-into-a-small-country-church/1600623783309867/>> . [↗](#)
 36. See, for example Avi Selk, Tim Craig, Shawn Boburg, and Andrew Ba Tran, "'They Showed his Photo, and My Stomach Just Dropped': Neighbors Recall Synagogue Massacre Suspect as a Loner," *Washington Post*, October 28, 2018; and Campbell Robertson, Christopher Mele, and Sabrina Tavernise, "11 Killed in Synagogue Massacre; Suspect Charged With 29 Counts," *New York Times*, October 27, 2018. [↗](#)
 37. Legal scholar Mary Anne Franks discusses white hetero-masculine "victim-claiming" in *The Cult of the Constitution* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2019), xii–xiii. [↗](#)
 38. See Caroline Light, *Stand Your Ground: A History of America's Love Affair with Lethal Self-Defense* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2017). [↗](#)
 39. Stroud, *Good Guys*, 85–87; 101–104. [↗](#)
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